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DREAMS.
HALLUCINATIONS.
VISIONS.

By
ERNST
BENZ

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Translated from the German by
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernst Benz, born in 1907 in Friedrichshafen, Germany, is a noted Protestant theologian, director of the Ecumenical Institute and Professor of Church History at the University of Marburg. With a wide range of interests in the fields of church history and the history of Christian dogmatics, he is a prolific writer. His works on a number of the great Christian mystics, particularly Gioacchino da Fiore and Emanuel Swedenborg, have won wide recognition. This also holds true for his works on the Orthodox Church, and many other topics. It is no exaggeration to rank him among the most able theological scholars of our time.

IN THIS DISSERTATION on dreams, hallucinations, and visions, I must, at the outset, qualify the theme in two respects: First, I shall not deal with the medical or psychiatric features of the phenomena but with their significance in the area of religious experience, and specifically Christian experience. Second, I shall relate my analysis of the phenomena to a particular religious figure in the scope of whose experience various types of dreams, hallucinations, and visions are matters of record; namely Swedenborg. I should point out in this respect, moreover, that the threefold division of the title does not represent a sequential arrangement in the sense of a proper factual or intellectual series but a simple point of departure in traditional terminology. This, itself, requires careful definition, which will be our first order of business.

When we speak in one breath of dreams, hallucinations, and visions, this set of terms is ill-matched because the expression 'hallucination' stems from medical usage and immediately invokes, or at least implies, a specific medico-pathological interpretation. Under 'Hallucination' we classify perceptions in the sphere of our sense organs which do not arise from an external stimulus but reflect

an abnormal impulse from within the central nerve system. In his *General Psychopathology* Jaspers says: "Genuine hallucinations are realistic delusions which do not proceed from real perceptions by transformation, but are completely new formulations which intrude as secondary effects simultaneously with real perceptions." Thus, the sense perception of the hallucinated person responds to no stimulus occasioned by any occurrence in his external environment. Such hallucinations occasionally accompany drunkenness. The drunkard who sees a herd of crocodiles bearing down on him climbs a lamp post and yells for help. But the approaching policeman, professionally committed to staunch sense perceptions, dutifully insists that there are no crocodiles in sight. . . .

Hallucinations may also be induced by drugs; mescaline, for example. Many recent experiments with this drug have been undertaken, especially since Huxley acknowledged its great significance. However, hallucinations also occur under circumstances of excessive mental tension or in moments of unwonted anxiety. We find among children a certain predisposition toward hallucination normally associated with highly emotional states, to which children appear more susceptible than adults.

Among those doing research on hallucinations there is now a procession of psychiatrists who, from

the beginning, have classified all visions in the field of religion as hallucinations. If one looks into Jaspers' *Psychopathology* he will find in it not one single entry of the keyword 'Visions.' Everything goes under the heading 'Hallucinations.' These psychiatrists—if they give any reason at all—point out that, in effect, among the visionaries there occur many hysterical and schizophrenic types; and that religious visionary experiences occur occasionally in connection with extreme physical conditions and, again, may be evoked by an extreme asceticism accompanied at times by the systematic practice of meditation leading to an exceptional or abnormal concentration and tension. This cavalier identification of visions with hallucinations has now been demonstrated to be completely inadequate; and indeed on the simple ground that neither the peculiarities and extraordinary multiplicity of the phenomena of hallucination, nor, more importantly, those of visions, have as yet been subjected to more than superficial investigation.

Phenomena far too heterogeneous have rashly been linked under the heading of hallucination. The full scope of visions in the Christian framework alone is very complex. From a purely phenomenological point of view, it presents a multiplicity almost impossible to survey which can by no means be identified with the concept of hallucination.

Above all, such identification ignores one of the fundamental distinctions between visions and hallucinations: the latter leaves no trace in the personality structure, in the will, or in the sphere of awareness of its subject, nor does it have any influence on one's spiritual consciousness or moral concepts. The drunkard who sees the crocodiles will sense a brief anxiety and perhaps even yell for help, but, when the hallucination is over, he will go home and sleep off his hangover. The effects are similar with visions which arise from mescaline intoxication. The subjective awareness of a deep insight into the ultimate mystery of the universe, accompanied by a sense of the deepest happiness and pleasure, belongs in the category of mescaline-induced experience. However, later on when the receiver of this insight recalls the nature of this ultimate awareness, which made him so deeply happy in his mescaline-induced intoxication, it is a matter of a somewhat meaningless general definition; for example, "Everything is unity," or something of the sort; and following his mescaline enlightenment he is no wiser than before. A group of theological students at Harvard once undertook to carry out research in meditation on Bible texts under mescaline stimulation. The end result was not encouraging.

The characteristic of a vision, though, is that it leads, as a byproduct, to a deep-rooted alteration

of personality in the person concerned. The religious vision is thereby directly identified with a 'call,' a summons to a new life; or it is combined with a specific perception which uproots a person from his former attitude and gives his life a new meaning and content. He is fundamentally changed from that point on! The receiver of the vision frequently takes it as an event which communicates a mandate specifically addressed to him; one which completely re-orientes his prior options and aims in life. We need only recall here the mandate-visions of the Old Testament prophets. The characteristic is, moreover—at least in the mind of the seer—an affirmative mandate, and to judge from its content, comes from God. One has only to scan the New Testament stories of the Apostles to recognize the circumstances. There we find the whole record of the mission and propagation of Christianity inscribed as a history linked by a progression of ever new visions. Beginning with the summons to Paul, down to Peter's vision of the vessel let down from heaven carrying clean and unclean animals which initiated the decisive shift, these visions gave an ever new impulse to the missions from the Jews to the pagans, and introduced new historical eras and new conditions of religious consciousness.

These and similar observations have moved a number of other psychiatrists, who have included

religious visions among their observations, to shy away from a specific interpretation of visions as hallucinations and frankly to acknowledge that the visionary experience does not have to be diagnosed as a pathological phenomenon. This acknowledgment is distinctly and very emphatically stated by C. G. Jung, and it is so much more significant because his own visions, regarding which he reports in his autobiography, are specifically connected with a serious illness. He tells, in his chapter on visions, how these occurred with him: "In the year 1944, unconscious of my environment following a heart attack, I suffered delirium and had visions which must have begun when I was in proximate peril of death and was being administered oxygen and camphor." Being in an avowed state of illness during his visions he had grounds for a purely pathological interpretation of them but, as said above, he positively rejected this. He obviously concluded that while visions could occur in a state of illness they were not at all, in themselves, a symptom of mental disorder.

Another connoisseur of the human psyche, Gruhle, in his work *Verstehende Psychologie, Erlebnislehre*, deals extensively with the phenomena of visions and writes: "It would be totally irresponsible to classify as mentally sick all those who suffer seizures, transports, conversions, or depressions, or to identify their state with any specific

malady because here, as everywhere, one finds every possible variety of these categories." This is manifestly directed against Jaspers, who brackets visions in the schizophrenic framework. Again, the same Gruhle says, in summing up: "It is an unfortunate framing of the question to ask whether or not mysticism and other uncommon occurrences in religious experience are phenomena of the disordered mind. It would be better to ask whether or not the subject of a mystic experience is physically ill or constitutionally abnormal. That there may be mentally sick people among such mystics cannot be denied, but it is entirely misleading to call all mystics psychotic."

So much for the concept of hallucination! Now in the case of dreams as a form of religious experience, psychological and psychiatric interpretation leaves us also somewhat high and dry, especially the psychological explanation, since the exegesis of a dream is grounded in a preconceived and systematized formula, largely abandoning any individualistic interpretation of the dream according to its own scope and action. The fact that dreams are psychologically ambiguous—witness that each great master of modern psychology, such as Freud, Adler, C. G. Jung, has developed his own complete system of dream interpretation—has provided an excuse for other psychiatrists to withdraw from this special field. This is all the more so

because, along with these masters, a host of other dream interpreters had been on the march since time immemorial beginning with the ancient temple oracles and soothsayers of the early cultures, on through the great throng of religious dream interpreters of the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages and to the classical dream books of Asian cults with which we are only lately becoming familiar. Here, too, the reaction of Gruhle is characteristic. At the end of his chapter on dreams he explains: "Particularly beautiful, detailed, or richly significant accounts of dreams always arouse the suspicion of an overactive imagination; not in the dreams but on the part of the dreamer. It is my firm conviction that no valid ground exists warranting attribution of any deeper meaning to dreams—be they in the sense of prophecy or wish fulfillment. It is of no importance whether the action of a dream makes no sense or develops haphazardly; emerging now as shaped fragments of life or tolerably ordered fantasies, and again in kaleidoscopic confusion. It is impossible for rational psychology to go along with dream interpretation. Every such case is mere poetic licence." This is a lame answer. It is unsatisfactory, however, not because the alternative—all those wonderful symbolisms and their connotation of a deep sense of personality development—is even more beautiful, but because, being purely phenomenological, the

dream itself, according to its picture content and its progressive development, calls insistently for interpretation. Naturally, dreams frequently cross our sleep and perhaps leave behind no recollection other than the impression that we have had a dream; or of which we have a fleeting memory without becoming a matter for reflection. There are, however, other dreams, more rare, which become distinctly stamped upon our memory, which bear in themselves the perceptions and the consciousness that they have something important to say to us; something fraught with meaning. When we awaken they cling in our minds. We can't get rid of them. They compel us to mull over what they might imply. Then we begin to screen the several possible interpretations until we find one that fits the circumstances. If we find none, we may discuss it with a friend or take it to a psychiatrist.

There is yet another characteristic phenomenon: in the absence of any explanation of a particularly obsessive dream it repeats itself. The triple repetition of a dream is not just a feature of literature; it is well attested in actual experience. This is also a common feature with visions. We are often restrained by some inhibition which conflicts with the communication thrust of a special and vivid dream; a psychological barrier which is only breached by its third onslaught. There are, then, dreams the inherent nature of which stamps them

as meaningful, and enjoins clarification of their significance. Some such dreams, however, activate in the dreamer a kind of intuitive perception of their meaning so that even during the course of the dream the dreamer becomes aware of what it is all about. There is a type which may be self-explanatory as to its meaning, its symbolism, or the course of its development, in which an explanatory voice may be heard on the heels of an occurrence, or the dream-figure himself tells what is intended. Such, in fact, is the transition from dream to apparition. Such apparitions, too, are known to us from New Testament accounts. The best known is Paul's night-vision in Troas, the region of the ancient city of Troy, where a Macedonian appeared to him standing on the other side, the Macedonian side of the water, and said "Cross over and help us." Thus the dream itself announced what was desired. It contained a directive; a directive to bring the message of the Gospel over to the other shore, to European soil; and Paul immediately set out for Kavalla, as it is called today. We have here, then, a case of dream-vision which produced direct and decisive effects. Such were those which brought Christianity to the soil of Europe.

Facing this situation it seems to me opportune, for the time being, to eliminate from consideration the whole terminology of hallucinations and to

focus, from a purely phenomenological viewpoint, on the various types of religious dreams and visionary experiences. First, a word about the special place visions have in the area of religious experience.

Whenever, in the history of Christianity, we encounter directly spontaneous transcendental manifestations in all their shattering impact—whether they are those of Meister Eckhart (1260-1327, Father of German mysticism), the ascetics of Syrian wastes or of the monasteries of Athos—the most striking effect is an instinctive reaction: the impression of inexpressibility of manifestations of transcendental experience or of the ultimate reality which, in traditional theological terms, denotes God. This reality is beyond all understanding, defies all definition, and is indeed beyond all dialectical expression of our thoughts. As Eckhart says, it is beyond good, beyond righteousness or even existence. Every mystic who has the urge to describe the inherent transcendence of reality never wearies of emphasizing that this ultimate reality is without image, is above all images, imageless, and that the believer must discard all images of his own in order to experience its infinite transcendence. In the setting of this divine mystery, as we shall call it provisionally, image and vision have no place. It is very characteristic that in all religious currents whose concepts and commitments

emphasize God's deepest existential transcendence, visions are looked upon askance, like religious art, as irresponsible depictions of the Divine. Below the level of this experience of encounter with simply ineffable transcendence, however, there lies a sphere of visionary phenomena in which a peculiar higher form of sensuous perception asserts itself. This has received scarcely any detailed research.

The term 'vision' is of general use but the concept itself is misleading insofar as it is in no wise precise, or if what is referred to is a mere visual impression restricted to an area of the inner sight, for what we are dealing with here is a multiform perception. What we mean by this visionary area is actually a complex of higher forms of sensory observation in which all our organs of normal sense perception concur, and indeed in the same complicated combinations characteristic of normal sensory reactions. There is, for example, hardly a form of visionary experience restricted to visual perception. It is much more often combined with audition, in which the auditory sphere, again, can be extremely variable. In this, not only sounds of various kinds, or words, or meaningful ideas, are included, but also a kind of music, both vocal and instrumental as well as genres wholly unknown and not reproducible in normal tonalities. We have explicit musical visions, if we may

use this paradoxical term. As an example the fourteenth century English visionary, named Roll, little known outside his own country, reported visions which owe their distinctiveness to descriptions of musical impressions. With such visions any impressions, sensations of touch, taste, and smell are likewise related in the most astonishing combinations. This is, then, an extraordinarily complex field of extrasensory perception which operates below the threshold, but on the point of a break-through into pure transcendence. We must bear in mind, moreover, that the so-called normal sensory experience itself is of an extraordinarily complicated nature. Although it is a common one for us we tend to overlook the fact that it is far from a simple matter in itself. Even the physiology of sense points up quite emphatically that each individual sense apprehension includes or comprises a host of components—scarcely analyzable singly—in the concurrence of which most if not all senses cooperate subconsciously, each with a highly individual character in every situation. Our personal faculty of apperception of light rays and sound waves, of scent or touch, develops in an area of astonishingly broad individual scope and not only adapts itself according to age, weather or climate, and even according to mental or emotional state, but also to the perceptive function of each separate sensory organism;

just as sight covers an extraordinarily complex, entirely individual range and combination of prior impressions. Thereby, here again, the limit of perception and the span within which options are exercised undergo very marked transformations according to both the inner and outer situations. Only from this point on is it to be understood that merely through something like toxic means—let us think only of tea, tobacco, or other normal stimulants—profound modifications can also occur within the functioning of our sense perceptions; and here, under specific conditions and in extremely tense circumstances, the border-line may be crossed.

I wish only to introduce this thought here for it doesn't make sense to speak always of a so-called normative, uniform type of sense perception and then contrast it with visionary phenomena. Under the circumstances it is rather that the higher type of sensory perception represents only a possible border-line case of the so-called normal sensory phenomenon which is, according to its structure, by no means such a simple or normal occurrence as it often appears. Indeed the great visionaries like Meister Eckhart, Saint Theresa, or John of the Cross, are generally conscious that the activation of a visionary experience, in the above mentioned complex sense, does not represent the highest form of religious experience and also that,

under certain circumstances, it is good to free one's self from this type of visionary imagery; to dispense with it and make a clean break from visions in order to experience God in His purest, imageless, substance.

It is thus seen to be characteristic of the very mystics who have exhibited the richest experience in this field that they are the earliest critics of visions.

Yet another preliminary word about the relation between dreams and visions. In the Old and ✓New Testaments dreams are dealt with on almost the same level as visions. Both appear there as direct divine manifestations. Like dreams, visions have the character of an individual appeal or summons to the dreamer or observer. Both can have a prophetic content. The only difference lies in the fact that the dream often merely consists of imagery the significance of which is initially ambivalent—we recall Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat and the seven lean kine. He does not know its meaning and has to ask Joseph. Then the interpreter explains its significance—a truly important matter since, on the basis of this interpretation, storage space for seven years has to be provided; a seven-year agricultural plan has to be organized.

Thus, dream and vision are both still on approximately the same level. In the well known promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

(Joel 2:28) we likewise find the flow of dreams and visions still side by side, and Peter preserves this impartiality in interpreting the significance of the happenings at Pentecost. He recalls this prophecy and, as the people stream together following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the disciples, he cries: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: and it shall come to pass in the last days, sayeth God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:16,17). Here also we find prophecy, dreams, and visions referred to as approximately synonymous. Correspondingly, we find visions, dreams and dream-visions side by side also in the accounts of dreams and of the Apostles, as indicated above.

But there is a peculiar process observable here in the development of Christian visions; namely the fact that the initial reaction of distrust toward the clearly manifest nature of vision, the fear of illusion, is directed against dreams sooner than against true visions. This may involve a double ambiguity: first because the practice of divination-dreams and dream interpretation, was intimately associated with ancient pagan cults, with the old oracle types, as well as the Asclepian; the sacred dreams in the Asclepian sanctuaries; second, be-

cause this practice still survived even in the early Christian Church and its expanding mission, and the Church, therefore, attributed value to it although holding itself aloof from it as a disreputable heathen dream practice. This circumstance may have provided grounds for the downgrading of dreams, but at least as influential was the fact that psychological self-examination is an unavoidable concomitant of visionary experience and forces the visionary to question whether he may not, in the final analysis, be the victim of an illusion. Basically, occidental psychology is in large part a product of visionary mysticism because, as we know, a vision compels the seer to meditate about it; how does it happen; what is going on; what are the psychological assumptions of such occurrences? One has only to pursue these questions to discover quickly that, normally, the dream has submerged itself so deeply in the subconscious life of the spirit that its prophetic or revelatory character cannot be conceded. This also means that in the visionary's process of self-criticism and in his participation in that charisma of mental discrimination the dream becomes the first target of the critic.

Significantly, even in the early Middle Ages with all theologians who, in the face of numerous visionary phenomena emerging in the areas of occidental Christianity, especially the monastic, have attempted theological systematization of visions,

we find a progressively more pronounced devaluation of dreams, leading eventually to disavowal of their respective revelatory or prophetic aspects. A certain downgrading of dreams becomes fairly well established as early as Saint Ansgar, the Apostle of the North, whose millennial anniversary was celebrated in 1965 in the northern church seat, and whose entire missionary effort was governed by visions in an amazing manner. The greater portions of his visions were of the dream variety but, for him, one was a particularly important heavenly revelation. He experienced this by day in a state of wakefulness, and it impelled him directly to begin his mission on Swedish soil. His biographer, Rimbert, emphasizes particularly that this revelation was more distinct—*apertius*—than the earlier ones—in *somnis*. Obviously, this must mean that such visions perceived in a state of wakefulness involve a deeper significance than dream-visions. The dream-visions of Saint Birgitta of Sweden suffered a still more pronounced downgrading. Through her visions the whole papal and occidental church history was decisively influenced. In a vision, Christ himself cautions her against dreams, “because in them the devil, as father and inventor of lies, mingles his falsities.” And then it is noted, “Why do happy dreams so exalt thee; why do sad dreams so depress? As dreams are not all acceptable, all are not to be heeded; for God

also often inspires good in the evil, for their redemption, whereby they attain to an understanding of their sins. He also frequently inspires the good through dreams; whereupon they advance further along His path. Therefore, when such a thing befall thee now and again, do not set thy heart thereon, but weigh and test it with thy saintly friends—or, on the other hand, pass it by and shut it from thy heart as though thou hadst never seen it; for whoso rejoices in such things will often be overwhelmed by confusion."

So we see that dream-visions are not completely excluded as a fundamental potential medium of revelation or instruction, but the dream-sphere itself is still discounted, and this to the point of a warning that a dream should be totally banished from the heart as "though thou hadst never seen it." ✱

The notion that God, too, can make use of dreams to bring instruction or revelation to man, is criticised and even entirely discredited also by such a visionary as Filippo Neri, whom we know from Goethe's account of his tour in Italy as the great Roman seer active in the second half of the sixteenth century. The heeding of dreams strikes ✓ him as simply reprehensible. It is reported about one of his adherents, Mattias by name, that "He went to his priest to confess, but before he could utter a word, Filippo asked if he believed in

dreams. When Mattias wanted to seize the opportunity to tell about his dream, his confessor glowered at him threateningly and said, 'Rise and leave me! Whoever wants to go to heaven must be a righteous man and a good Christian, and may not believe in dreams.'" And he proceeded to explain: "We have to catch those who would fly without wings by the feet and bring them back to earth to save them from falling into the snares of the devil." That is, then, a wholly clear, even a progressive trend.

Nevertheless, in the history of Christian visions, prophetic and dream-visions have preserved a certain respectability; even among modern religious visionaries there are some whose religious experiences occur exclusively by way of dream. The most striking example is Don Bosco, the well-known founder of the Salesian Order, who concerned himself with the shelter and nurture of neglected youth in the large industrial areas of Milan. All his activities, and even the foundation of the Order itself, were constantly guided by visions. All these visions, however, were in dreams; and what makes this specialty of dreams particularly striking in the case of Don Bosco is the fact that a pronounced gift of clairvoyance in dreams was a distinguishing peculiarity of his childhood. At school and college he soon earned the nickname of "Dreamer." Class-

mates of Giovanni Bosco recorded that he had twice dreamed on the preceding night the entire assignment his professor intended to dictate the following day, and early those mornings he had written it down so completely that the teacher could not believe his eyes. Some of his childhood dreams were acknowledged later, by himself, as prophetic, pointing to his activity as benefactor and teacher of neglected children. His later apparitions, which impelled him to found his Order in 1844, also came to him in part through dreams. He then had the most important of these, which related to his call and foundation of the Order, documented and recorded in 1867 at the instance of Pius IX, Pope during the First Vatican Council. His case is surely to be regarded as exceptional, and it is very characteristic that he considered the papal legitimization above all necessary to record these things.

In perspective, it can be asserted with considerable assurance that dreams were "withdrawn from oral circulation" very early, and this fact is so much more noteworthy for us in that this process is repeated in the development of the spiritual experience of Emanuel Swedenborg. With him also the multiform field of visionary occurrences begins with a high proportion of dreams which he understood, in a certain sense, as revelatory; and at

least instructive. In this sense he heeded them and only later achieved a certain uniform type of inner sight.

We now approach the second chapter of this study: to analyze the distinctive vision experience of Swedenborg, which, for this purpose, we deal with in a special manner. The peculiarity of Swedenborg lies in the circumstances that he stands as the scientist at the summit of the science of his time. It is perhaps here appropriate to recall, to set the record straight, so to speak, that he had played a special role as a great inventor in the technological field. He was the founder of the earliest technical journal in the field of physics: the *Daedalus*, in which he also published the design of the first aircraft embodying features indispensable for successful flight, a mock-up of which is still to be seen today in the Swedish National Museum. The title of his journal has been taken over by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences which carries Swedenborg's *Daedalus* on to this day, with interesting studies in cybernetics and similar topics. It is therefore not so far out of place to refer to Swedenborg in connection with an advanced institute of technology as might appear at first glance.*

I cannot go into Swedenborg's biography here,

* The speaker delivered this address in the hall of an institute of technology.

but will only start from the circumstance that he had, first of all, an intensely religious life in a severely pietistic, patriarchal, orthodox home. His father was the Lutheran Bishop of Skara, an orthodox Patriarch, and Swedenborg grew up in this rigorous Christian tradition. Inwardly, however, he became progressively estranged from this environment of domestic Christianity in proportion to his absorption in natural science. While yet a young student he went to England where he established relationships with the great bellwethers of modern natural science—Newton, Halley, Flamsteed—and the fathers of modern geography and other pioneers of our modern scientific disciplines. At the height of his scientific career, which equipped him to clarify the enigmas of reality by means of analytical deduction, he began to undergo a series of visionary experiences of the most varied kinds. In his *Diarium Spirituale* (Spiritual Diary) he later wrote: "Before my senses were adapted to conscious participation in the life of the spirit I had, over a period of years, a number of such evidences that the Lord was guiding me through the spiritual world, that now I wonder why I failed to be conscious of it during all that time. For some years I not only had dreams which instructed me regarding things I was writing about, but I experienced changes of state while writing in that an extraordinary light seemed to flow from

the things I recorded. Later, I had many visions with my eyes closed, and marvelous illuminating insights. I also felt an inflow from the spiritual world as distinct as an impact on my physical senses. I experienced various kinds of afflictions from evil spirits while undergoing temptations and when I later wrote something to which spirits had an aversion I was all but obsessed by them so that I felt something like an ague. I saw lights and heard voices in early morning besides many other things, until finally a spirit spoke to me in distinct words, and I was astonished that he could read my thoughts."

It is evident that we have here an entire spectrum of various types of phenomena—at any rate as interpreted in the light of later developments. We will skip the interpretation, for the moment, and deal with the phenomena. For him, this begins with 'evidences' that the validity of occurrences experienced during the composition of his scientific works, and in which specific scientific insights suddenly assume the appearance of certainty, might be established by empirical experiment. Arm in arm with geometrical, as he calls them, or analytical judgments, intuition also walks and provides support. He has the *Gefühl* [intuition]; a light comes to him.

These experiences are in connection with his *Regnum Animale* (The Animal Kingdom), which

is accredited in the histories of modern natural science as one of the most significant achievements of his era. In it he pioneered an evolutionary concept of organic life throughout the whole animal kingdom including mankind; researches such as were only later undertaken in the perspective of the evolutionary and natural selection theories of Darwin. He also undertook highly meaningful research on the development of the brain and its evolution through the individual categories of animal species to the human. He refers to dreams as an initial form of living experience. Their peculiarity is that the very clarity of their perception relates them to the scientific quest, in which he is currently absorbed; that he finds himself instructed by them as to the accuracy of the insights which he is trying to capture in manuscript; or that the dream brings him a conclusive insight into a coherence which had hitherto eluded him. Dreams figure in the separate sections of his work *Regnum Animale*. They serve thus as a kind of censor of daily scientific output and either confirm the instructions or admonish him to a more thorough treatment of the material; or suddenly yield an overwhelming over-all realization, which as yet had not emerged from his Euclidian procedure of analysis.

That is by no means as abstruse as it sounds. Unfortunately, here too, research has dealt thus

far too sparsely with the theme of science plus intuition. I venture only to point out that long series of modern scientific discoveries are connected with dream experience—not, of course, that laymen never had such dreams, but that dreams have stimulated the intuitions of researchers. Atom-scientist Niels Bohr, for example, had a strange dream as a student: he sat on a sun of burning gas; hissing planets hung before his eyes connected with the sun by slender cords and slowly circling it. Suddenly this gas solidified, the sun and planets shrank simultaneously and hardened into a system of spheres held together by cords. At this point Bohr awoke and suddenly realized that he had hit upon the model of an atom he had long been looking for. The sun represented the stable nucleus around which the electrons orbited, and this model thereupon took its place in atom physics as its familiar demonstration piece. A dream; but naturally the dream of a man who was absorbed in that particular field.

Exactly the same thing happened with the benzol ring of Kekulé von Stradonitz. He noted in his diary: "One summer evening I was dozing in a bus, on my way home. I distinctly saw atoms coupling together around me in pairs. These pairs merged into larger structures which, in turn, were attracted by even larger groups; and all these tiny bodies gyrated in a circling orbit. I spent part

of the night in diagramming it on paper. The theory of structure was established." The significance of this other, the benzol-ring model, needs no elaboration by me.

These things, we see, are not particularities of Swedenborg, but there are religious and there are scientific intuitions; meanwhile, however, no one knows how to define the relationship between them.

Swedenborg, for his part, has expressed himself regarding this relationship as a theory of cognition. I quote a few of his words: "Pseudo scholars who practice a self-serving discipline, without true inner vocation, build castles in the air which they then solemnly invite people to inspect. On the other hand, born scholars possess the rare aptitude of beginning with given phenomena and then uncovering their causes; and that requires a disciplined mind as well as a well developed imagination and intuition. When such born thinkers, after a long flight of thought, discover a truth, they sense a burst of light, a kind of confirmatory lightning flash which illuminates their chain of reasoning; a certain mysterious ray streaming into the holy of holies of the brain. In this manner a kind of mental voice manifests itself and gives the signal, as it were, that the mind is summoned to a sort of inner union and reverts at that moment into the Golden Age, so to speak, of its primitive state."

Swedenborg closes this description with the comment that the mind that has once enjoyed this privilege proceeds from then on with dedicated efforts and considers all other enjoyments as trifling in comparison.

We see how Swedenborg systematizes his own research experience. But these experiences—and that is his particularity—are multiplied with him. This leads finally to a crisis in the orientation of his heretofore scientific dedication. He writes in his *Spiritual Diary* under date of Oct. 29, 1743, for example: "When I awoke this morning, I was overwhelmed by a dizziness or languor like I suffered six or seven years ago when I began work on the *Oeconomia Regni Animalis* (Economy of the Animal Kingdom) but so much more subtle that I seemed to be near death. It occurred when I saw the light, yet gradually dissipated as I relapsed into semi-slumber so that the debility was more internal and deeper, yet subsiding more rapidly. It indicated that my brain was then actually freed and cleansed of that which obstructed these thoughts, as on a previous occasion, because it gave me [and here he uses an alien English word] *penetration*." This occurrence of illumination was thus accompanied by liberation from hampering thoughts, with an inner purification combined with a gift of insight into the true nature of things.

The fog dissipates. He sees things in their primal form, and this is combined with an ecstatic sense of elation and joy. Nor is this unfamiliar in the history of Christian mysticism. I need only refer to Jakob Böhme: his insight into the nature of all things; concretely nothing else than that "penetration," that glimpse into the inner structure of matter. We find an identical experience, to refer to a Swabian author, with Philipp Matthaus Hahn, for whom this was likewise the decisive occurrence in his religious development.

It is understandable that these visions evoked in Swedenborg a severe internal conflict. His field was exact science, empirical research, meticulous observations of natural phenomena combined with distinguished technological responsibilities. He was Assessor of Mines and had to supervise the adequate functions of the pumps which assured proper drainage; he was called upon to engineer the transportation of Charles XII's battle fleet across mountain and valley, indispensable to resolve a critical military situation, and numerous other similar matters. But already his introduction into the undergirding of nature, *Principia Naturalia*—another great work—had demonstrated that, to develop true perception, the laborious Euclidean technique, the *more geometrico*, did not suffice; that the objective of the research he had in mind

was a higher form of perception; "the perception of Adam: the perception of angels" as the contemporary idiom called it. From the drafting stage of his work, *Oeconomia Regni Animalis* onward, deeper insights and intuitions began to come to him in progressive abundance. If truths then flashed into his mind by way of such intuitions, if unanticipated avenues into the realm of truth opened their gates to him, was it still necessary for him to persist further on the path of his empirical 'assembly line' and experimentation? And—on the other hand—if it afforded a passport into an inner temple, a secret, direct source of divine truths, a lightning flash in the inner man; if it were a case of direct contact with the spiritual world, was he, most importantly, worthy of such special enlightenment? Was his own inner temple ready to receive God? Thus these experiences marked for him the onset of a religious crisis, beginning with a questioning of his own personal worthiness, of the sanctity of his personal life, and further, of his competence for the call. Such was the religious crisis which affected him during the years 1743-44. It tore him away from his previous preoccupations and, following a series of intervening experiences, led him to dedicate the rest of life to this exclusive quest and to a new form of spiritual activity.

I cannot here detail the stages of this development. In any case, we can perceive directly from his record of dreams how he was precipitated into a long series of shattering and nerve-wracking nightmares. I will mention only one. "I seemed to be clinging to a rung on a cliff above a yawning abyss. I hung there without foothold, trying desperately to pull myself up, the abyss gaping below me." So he hung on above an abyss. He interpreted the experience thus: that he desperately wanted to extricate himself from the abyss of his spiritual selfhood but was unable to do so by his own strength.

Linked with these intuitive experiences is a moral purification which seeks return to the religious state of his youth and which now, on the basis of such occurrences, appears to Swedenborg in a new light. Now he sees it as a product of the mind. There are three things which have characterized his life hitherto and under the influence of the spirit, he recognizes their danger: self-love and ambition, vanity in his scientific achievements, and strong erotic drives. His self-confidence in the field of science is shaken. He acknowledges that only errors flow from himself and truth from God alone. Even so, he observes that, along with gaining control over his selfish propensities, his sexual drives also diminish. These

had earlier been so overpowering that he wrote: "My passion for women, which was my chief drive, disappeared."

The Diary brings out, and later entries emphasize, how the struggle continues tempestuously. For example: In a dream he is standing close to some machinery—here, for the first time an interesting technical dream—a contrivance set in motion by a rotor. He becomes more and more entangled in the spokes, is drawn aloft and cannot get down; so he awakens in terror. The new technology intrudes even into the sphere of dreams.

He persistently tries to cling to his Christian faith. He puts it to the test and attends the Holy Supper during Easter Week, a practice long since abandoned, which evokes anew a deep anxiety, and the outcome, following a renewed purifying experience, is a Christ-vision. He himself wrote: "I felt something holy come over me. I went to sleep and around midnight or 1 or 2 A. M. a severe trembling began to shake me from head to foot, brought on by a roar like the collision of many winds. Its violence was such that I was thrown flat on my face. At the moment of falling I awoke to find myself stretched out on the floor. I wondered what it could mean, and coming fully awake, these words burst spontaneously from my lips: 'Oh thou almighty Jesus, who comest to such

a sinner, make me worthy of thy grace!' Then I raised my hands in prayer and as another hand grasped mine and strongly pressed them together, I continued: 'Oh thou who hast promised to take all sinners unto thee in mercy, canst not but keep thy word!' There I lay on his breast and beheld him face to face. It was a face with such an imprint of holiness as it is beyond me to describe. I truly believe that his face was such during his life on earth."

Critics have taken exception to the further account of this vision, which is to the effect that Christ addressed Swedenborg directly, asking him if he had a certificate of good health; a strange question—unless one is familiar with its antecedents, to which we will turn shortly. Swedenborg records his reply: "'Oh my Lord, thou knowest that better than I.' He then said, 'Act accordingly.' I took this to mean 'Love me truly,' 'Do what you have promised.' God grant me grace so to do! I understood that I could not do so by my own strength alone. Then I awoke trembling."

What is one to understand by such an enquiry regarding a Certificate of Good Health? The reference is connected with one of the most decisive experiences of his scientific career. As a student, following his studies with the most cele-

brated natural scientists in Sweden, he had set out for England from Gothenburg to round out his studies. He sailed in a Swedish ship out of Gothenburg, where a plague had broken out, and the ship's papers did not include a clean bill of health. It was consequently detained in quarantine for six weeks by the English Coast Guard. This was naturally a severe blow for the student, having to wait so long in sight of his 'Promised Land,' the home of many men whose acquaintance he had enjoyed during the seven preceding years. Moreover, Swedish friends came out in their boats, rowed around the ship and tried to entertain the newcomer a little during the long wait. Well and good, one day Swedenborg allowed himself to be taken ashore in such a skiff. He set out for London, avid to resume his studies, quarantine or no quarantine. But the English health authorities did not find this amusing. The plague was the plague and Swedenborg was apprehended and sentenced to hang. At the last moment his friends alerted the Swedish Consul General—after all, Swedenborg was the son of a Bishop—and succeeded, with great difficulty and pressure, in rescuing the young man from an early grave.

Bearing this background in mind, The Lord's question had a special significance for Swedenborg. At that time he was, after many vicissitudes, within

sight of a longed for goal. Although coming from an area raging with pestilence he had entered into the 'Promised Land' stealthily and illegally without a clean bill of health; and had almost ended this unseemly intrusion on the gallows. Now that, after much research and experiment, his inner self was offshore of his spiritual quest he was reminded of the question of the Coast Guard: "Do you have a Certificate of Good Health?" That is to say: Are you worthy and equipped to enter this country? Have you undergone the final quarantine tests and purification? We may now grasp the profound significance that he attributed to this Christ-vision.

The definitive vision, to which I refer in conclusion, has a unique ambivalence; namely a certain triviality together with the deepest import. It is the vision which brings an entire religious development to maturity. Primarily, it is a matter of a purification trauma foreshadowing his definitive summons.

Several antecedent experiences had already indicated that he was hard hit by the abandonment of his Swedish career. A mysterious figure had once appeared to him during a meal and said, "Don't eat so much!" Thereupon he perceived a mist arise from his body, gather beneath the table, and transform itself into slithering worms.

These, in turn, coalesced in a fiery ball and exploded. From that moment on he felt absolved from the future research to which it seems he had most seriously committed himself. The following night marked the beginning of what he termed his access to the spiritual environment; the beginning of association with spiritual beings; the summons; the disclosure of the mysteries of the spiritual sphere; specifically in the form of insight into the underlying spiritual sense of Holy Writ. It was the breakthrough into a new activity to which, from then on, he dedicated himself exclusively and which governed the entire remainder of his life to the age of 85. Here it is material to add that he enjoyed excellent health to the end.

More precise analysis of such personal phenomena in visions, as we have demonstrated by more or less arbitrary selections from Swedenborg, shows that it is impossible to lump the complex multiplicity of symptoms together into the single category of hallucination. On the other hand, however, the many forms of visionary experience types immediately show how difficult it is to offer an interpretation which will fit all phenomena. For my part, it appears to me as presumptuous to put forward a new theory as a solution warranting the pretension to an all-inclusive interpreta-

tion of phenomena. In this respect I might merely suggest a viewpoint for consideration: hitherto, psychology—including the psychology of religion—has sought to explain the phenomena of visions by interpreting them as products of the sub-conscious which bring to external expression, in a symbolic archetypal manner, conflicts repressed into the sub-conscious and not mastered in the conscious. This interpretation is surely valid for some visions, in which now and then the particular construction is a true one (whether, for example, as Freud emphasizes, all are only erotic symbols). Basically, we have to acknowledge that a part of the visions, as with dreams too, relates to sub-conscious activity. It is impossible, however, to explain all phenomena in terms of this source of visions as the imaginative activity of the 'collective sub-conscious,' above all, phenomena which arise in the area of prophetic and revelatory visions. While eidetic visions and dreams which rise from the sub-conscious have the character of unstable flashing and fading forms, which really reflect certain scraps of emotional and intellectual life of the affected personality, but which fizzle out ineffectually, there lies at the roots of prophetic and revelatory visions a creative element that nourishes a characteristic transformation of personality structure; its perceptive and volitional

framework. Frequently, too, it is grasped and implemented by a large part of the contemporary public as a factor in evolving human social forms. It furthermore leaves undisputed a certain inner coherence, even a certain inner progression, in the occurrence of visionary experience—at least in the history of Christianity. New consciousness structures, new recognition content, and even new emotional areas, merge quite harmoniously into such visions. These facts, then, appear rather to offer—if one but grants not only a sub-conscious but a supra-consciousness—in the form of prophetic or revelatory visions, an explanation regarding the impact of transcendence on the human psyche (always referred to by mystics as the soul's dynamic or the stronghold of the soul) which influences the development of the religious and moral consciousness of mankind. It is highly significant that modern anthropology returns directly and repeatedly to the idea that this supra-consciousness appears as the goal and point of convergence of human consciousness.

We find these notions, for example, in Aurobindo, the leading neo-Hindustani thinker; the founder of Ashram of Pondichéry. According to his doctrine of integral yoga mankind is committed and on the way to a highly developed human consciousness. He understands human history as

the account of progressively new breakthroughs or, as he puts it, testimony to the descent of the super-consciousness. In this connection he is also one of the few thinkers who have developed a kind of philosophy of visions. We find a closely parallel conception with Teilhard de Chardin, always related to the global, collective development of the whole of humanity, and with respect to which he awaits a new evolutionary mutation; a breakthrough into the super-consciousness as a finale to the contemporary process of integration and socialization.

Such interpretation of visions could naturally have highly significant consequences, not only in the sense that the phenomenon of vision itself must forthwith be taken seriously once again as a self-expression of transcendental reality, but also in the sense of a reorientation of psychology and religious philosophy. Such an interpretation demands of psychologists that they first abandon their hasty identification of visionary phenomena with parallel—apparently parallel—psychopathological phenomena as a self-evidencing interpretative principle, and then carefully research the question of possible differentiation between the pure pathologic and non-pathologic. It is also demanded of theologians that they outline afresh the categories of a pertinent theology of visions

in their over-all framework of prophecy and revelation, and that they free themselves from the intervening, almost pathological timidity evoked by criticism of a misunderstood Schleiermacher and the followers of a one-sided interpretation of Kierkegaard; rejecting the significance of religious experience, especially in its meaning for the salvation and redemption of mankind. Only then will occidental Christianity be in a position to counter the criticism of Aurobindo, who condensed his reproof of the Western spiritual impoverishment in the sentence: "Not to have heard the voices of God and his angels is the Western world's conception of spiritual sanity."

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